WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for use in lossy compression of image data, the method comprising:

selecting more than one image from a plurality of images; and

creating a composite image which comprises the selected images,

wherein, for at least one of the selected images, lossy compression of the composite image results in improved compressibility.

2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein improved compressibility is determined at least in part by comparing an image's compressibility when compressed separately and the image's compressibility when compressed as part of the composite image.

3. A method according to Claim 2, wherein improved compressibility is determined at least in part on an aggregate improvement, which is an aggregate of an improvement measure associated with each of the selected image.

4. A method according to Claim 3, wherein image selection is determined based at least in part on the aggregate improvement.

5. A method according to Claim 2, wherein image selection is based at least in part on achieving some number of images whose composite compressibility value is greater than its individual compressibility value.

6. A method according to Claim 1, wherein selecting a plurality of images further comprises:

obtaining, for each of the plurality of images, an individual compressibility value that specifies a measure of quality resulting from separately compressing the image at a given rate of compression; and

selecting from the plurality of images based at least in part on the individual compressibility value.

7. A method according to Claim 6, wherein image selection is further based on image size.

8. A method according to Claim 6, wherein image selection is further based on composite image size.

9. A method according to Claim 6, wherein each image is compressed using more than one compression rate, and wherein more than one individual compressibility value is associated with each image.

10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein a compression rate is identified for the composite image based on the individual compressibility values associated with the selected images.

11. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

compressing each of the plurality of images individually;

determining an individual compressibility value for each of the images;

identifying a number of image collections each of which includes more than one of the plurality of images;

compressing each collection as a whole;

determining, for each image in an image collection, a composite compressibility value, which represents the image's compressibility as part of the image collection; and

for each image in an image collection, obtaining a ratio based on the image's individual compressibility value and composite compressibility value,

wherein image selection is based at least in part on the obtained ratio.

12. A method according to Claim 11, wherein each of the plurality of images are individually compressed multiple times using different rates of compression.

13. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

determining a minimum compression rate for the composite image.

14. An apparatus for use in lossy compression of image data, said apparatus comprising means for performing the functions specified in any of Claims 1 to 13.

15. An apparatus comprising:

a program memory for storing process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 13; and

a processor for executing the process steps stored in said program memory.

16. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer readable medium, said computer-executable process steps for use in lossy compression of image data, said computer-executable process steps comprising process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 13.